



CUARTETO LATINOAMERICANO

Saúl Bitrán, violin I
Arón Bitrán, violin II
Javier Montiel, viola
Alvaro Bitrán, cello

2:30 PM, April 22, 2012
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
In cooperation with Pacific's
Conservatory of Music

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Fantasia for String Quartet (1946)

Gonzalo CASTELLANOS YUMAR
(Venezuela, 1926)

Barcarola (1932)

Francisco MIGNONE
(Brazil, 1897–1986)

Minuetto (1924)

Tres Canciones Españolas (1929)

Cuarteto en Sol (Quartet in G) (1958)

Domingo LOBATO
(Mexico, 1920)

Lento

Largo

Rudo

—intermission—

Echú* (2010)

Alejandro CARDONA
(Costa Rica, 1959)

Lullaby (1919)

George GERSHWIN
(Brooklyn, 1898–1937)

String Quartet No. 5 (1931)

Heitor VILLA-LOBOS
(Brazil, 1887–1959)

Poco Andantino

Vivo ed Energico

Andantino—Tempo Giusto

Vivo ed Energico

* Dedicated to Cuarteto Latinoamericano

CUARTETO LATINOAMERICANO is represented in the USA by
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Artists

Cuarteto Latinoamericano is a world renowned string quartet from Latin America that will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary season this year. Founded in Mexico in 1981, Cuarteto Latinoamericano is the leading proponent of Latin American music for string quartet. Three members are brothers, but all four share a mission to spread Latin American chamber music to the world. They have toured extensively in Europe, the Americas, Israel, China, Japan and New Zealand. The quartet has introduced more than a hundred works written for them and participated in over a hundred world premieres. They are the recipient of a 1983 Mexican Music Critics Association award and "most adventurous programming" awards from CMA/ASCAP in 1997, 1999, and 2000.

Cuarteto Latinoamericano was quartet-in-residence at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh from 1987 until 2008. They have collaborated with many artists including cellists János Starker and Yehuda Hanani, pianists Santiago Rodriguez, Cyprien Katsaris and Rudolph Buchbinder, tenor Ramón Vargas, and guitarists Narciso Yepes, Sharon Isbin, David Tanenbaum and Manuel Barrueco. A commissioned guitar quintet from American composer Gabriela Lena Frank, *Inca Dances*, won a Grammy in 2009 for Best New Latin Composition.

Cuarteto Latinoamericano has recorded over sixty CDs, which include the complete works for string quartet by Heitor Villa-Lobos, Silvestre Revueitas, Alberto Ginastera, as well as most of the Latin American repertoire for string quartet. The sixth volume of their Villa-Lobos 17-quartet cycle, recorded for Dorian, was nominated for Grammy Awards for Best Chamber Music and Best Latin Music.

The Cuarteto is credited with the emergence of a new generation of string players. Under the auspices of the Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles of Venezuela, the Cuarteto has created the Latin American Academy for String Quartets, based in Caracas, which serves as a training ground for five select young string quartets from the Sistema. The Cuarteto visits the Academy four times a year.

Program

"Spanish music" or "Latin rhythms" are standard labels used to describe music from Latin American sources. If you replace "Spanish" and "Latin" with "American" and "Anglo", the ambiguity of such terms is obvious. In Latin America, there is usually some local musical flavor, and the inherent cultural and ethnic factors of a region or group are more strongly expressed than their political frameworks or boundaries. Today you may compare the music by composers from four different Latin American locations.¹

Castellanos Yumar—*Fantasia*

Gonzalo Castellanos Yumar, Venezuelan composer and conductor, began his musical studies at age 6 with his father, an organist and choirmaster. He studied composition in 1940 with Vicente Emilio Sojo at the Escuela Superior de Música, Caracas. In 1947 his *Suite Caraqueña* won the National Composition Prize. His symphonic work *Antelación e imitación fugaz* won in the 1955 Belgian Queen Elisabeth Competition. From 1959 to 1963, he studied conducting, analysis and orchestration, and attended classes of Celibidache and Messiaen.

Castellanos returned to Venezuela in 1963 and held several posts as conductor, teacher and administrator. In 1978 he gave up conducting to dedicate himself to composition. In 1990 he received the National Music Prize of Venezuela for lifetime achievement. Despite his small output, Castellanos is recognized as a great Venezuelan composer.

His *Fantasia for String Quartet* reflects a post-Impressionist nationalist aesthetic and introduces elements of Venezuelan traditional music within a classical framework. Listen for the constant alternating 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures, a hallmark of Venezuelan music.

Mignone—*Tres Piezas*

Francisco Paolo Mignone, son of an Italian immigrant flutist, is one of the most significant figures in Brazilian classical music. In 1968 he was chosen Brazilian composer of the year and is considered one of the most significant Brazilian composers.

A graduate of the São Paulo and Milan

Conservatories, Mignone returned to São Paulo in 1929 to teach harmony, and in 1933 took a post in Rio de Janeiro at the Escola Nacional de Musica. Mignone was a versatile composer, writing solo songs, piano pieces, chamber instrumental works, orchestral works, choral works, five operas and eight ballets.

Much of Mignone's music is strongly nationalistic in which he uses the folk and popular melodies and forms of his native Brazil as a basis for his compositions. His solo vocal and piano works earned him particular acclaim for their expression of Brazilian musical styles, such as the choro, the modinha, and the valsas (waltzes) of which he wrote a series called *Valsas da Esquina*, for various instruments.

Brazilian musicologist Osvaldo Colarusso has this to say about the three pieces in today's concert: "The *Barcarola* was written at the beginning of Mignone's period of collaboration with Mario de Andrade. It begins with the characteristic flowing rhythm of the Italian *Barcarolla*, but there is also an element of nationalist character in the middle section, in 3/8, where we can foresee the *Valsas da Esquina*."

"The *Minuetto* is the oldest work for string quartet by this author. Written in 1924, it has absolutely nothing "Brazilian", neither in the...main theme or in the Trio. It is actually a transcription of an excerpt from the opera *O contratador de diamantes*, written in 1921.

"Between 1927 and 1929 Mignone was in Spain, and during this time he wrote several songs in Spanish. Vasco Mariz, the Brazilian historian, said in his *History of Music in Brazil* that it was in this period when Mignone became a great songwriter. In 1932 he transcribed three of these songs for string quartet: *Nana, ¿Por qué lloras morenita, and Las mujeres son las moscas*. In these transcriptions the main song line is in the first violin, while the other instruments accompany. The subtleties of the instrumentation (harmonics, *tremolo*) put us in an almost impressionistic atmosphere."

Lobato—*Cuarteto en Sol*

Domingo Lobato was born in 1920 in Morelia, in the state of Michoacan. In 1951, Lobato accepted an invitation to collaborate at the State of Jalisco School of Fine Arts. In 1956, he agreed to teach at the music school of the University of

¹ Five if you count Brooklyn

Guadalajara where he was director for 18 years. In 1958, he received the *Premio Jalisco* for the Arts as a musician, teacher and composer. His works include religious music for choir and for organ, symphonies, concerti, chamber music, and music for theatre and ballet.

Lobatos' *Cuarteto en Sol* is written in a language which, although romantic in its gestures and aesthetic conception, is nonetheless firmly rooted in the 20th Century. The *Lento* begins with a highly chromatic and slow introduction, followed by a faster and rocking movement in 12/8. The character of the music is easy-going and flowing, although you should listen for a relentless, bold use of chromatics. The second movement is one of the most poignant pieces ever written for string quartet in Mexico. You will hear a lengthy viola solo, which explores a dark and emotive setting. The movement fades out leaving a sense of vague yearning. However, in the 3rd movement (*Rudo*, literally, rough), he lets his Mexican character surface. The music is joyful, and the roughness is mainly apparent in the *staccato* articulation of the eighth notes.

Cardona—Echú

Costa Rican composer and guitarist, Alejandro Cardona, studied composition with Luis Jorge Gonzalez, Leon Kirchner, Ivan Tcherepnin and Curt Cacioppo. He graduated from Harvard University and has a Master's Degree in Image Synthesis and Computer Animation from Portsmouth University and The Utrecht School of the Arts. He lived for many years in Mexico where he conducted research on popular Meso-American and Caribbean music. Since 1986 he has worked at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, in the Cultural Identity, Art and Technology Program and the Music School where he is founder of the Latin American Composition Workshop.

The composer writes: "Echu originated as a piece composed for the Calacas Blues Band (a contemporary Latin American blues oriented group). Since then it has been adapted for various instrumental groups: 6 cellos (for Alvaro Bitran's CD, *Mi Chelada*), cello and strings, 5 percussionists and electric bass guitar, and now for string quartet. Echu is one of the names given to an important Yoruban Orisha (deity) of Nigerian origin, also known as Elegguá, who, among other things, is responsible for "opening

[metaphorical] doors". We could say that this piece is a contemporary and Latin-Americanized reinvention of the blues ..."

Gershwin—Lullaby

Speaking of blues, Gershwin's *Lullaby* is a fairly early work, from the same period as his breakthrough hit song *Swanee* and his Broadway play *La La Lucille*. He was at this same time a devoted student in theory and harmony of Edward Kilenyi, a Hungarian émigré who encouraged his gifted pupil's interest in popular music. *Lullaby* started life as one of Gershwin's exercises, in this case writing for string quartet. It is in straightforward A-B-A form, with an occasional soupçon of jazz (listen for syncopation and "blue" notes) suggestive of Gershwin's popular leanings.

Gershwin never did anything himself to promote the piece in its original form, but he did turn it into the aria "Has Anyone Seen My Joe?" a number in his unsuccessful² 1922 Afro-American opera *Blue Monday*. *Lullaby* had to wait until 1967 to resurface in its original form, when it was revived by the Juilliard String Quartet.

Villa-Lobos—Quartet No. 5

Heitor Villa-Lobos, easily one of the most consistently prolific Latin American composers, launched the Nationalist movement in Brazilian music when his music was featured at the pivotal *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Week of Modern Art) in São Paulo in 1922. He wrote for an extensive variety of instrumental combinations from symphonies to operas but today is most often remembered for his just as significant set of Baroque-inspired "Bachianas Brasileiras," his contribution to the more "traditional" chamber music where he adapted Baroque harmonic and contrapuntal procedures to Brazilian music.

It has become predictable to describe Villa-Lobos' musical output as diverse, as huge, and as vibrant as his life-long inspiration, the Amazon rain forest. It is a colorful comparison: Villa-Lobos' catalogue, more than 2,000 works, contains an astounding diversity of forms that document the composer's inquisitive and adventurous spirit. His stated goal was to escape the 19th century European tradition, drawing inspiration instead from the folk music of Brazil.

Villa-Lobos wrote a total of 17 string quartets and was working on an eighteenth at the time of his death in 1959. They span a period of forty-two years, are filled with the composer's skillful experiments with tonality, polyrhythm, color, sonority, texture, and his much beloved and ubiquitous Brazilian folk language, and are peculiarly and lamentably missing from the customary concert repertoire. His quartets have pronounced strict discipline, although they eschew the structures of classical tradition: strict sonata movements, variations, and rondos. None is a compositional exercise, but rather they all display his ability to synthesize his broad range of inspirations.

Composed in São Paulo in 1931, the fifth quartet is among the most immediately appealing and at the same time one of the most inventive of all 17 quartets. Its stable tonal logic and unmistakable melodies coexist with astonishing originality and creativity. The first movement has seven sections organized in a three-part arrangement. First is a theme derived from an old round over a persistent rhythm. Listen for a related idea to follow in harmonics. Third is a simple notion with pizzicato accompaniment. A brief restatement of the initial theme rounds off the first part. The fourth part of the movement is an evocative 4/4 love song (*modinha*) with a rapid, syncopated dance as a contrasting component. Three more ideas form the closing part of the movement: a 4/4 theme over a rhythmic accompaniment, a brighter 2/2 theme, and finally a 12/8 *presto* epilogue, based on material related to the quartet's opening. The second movement is nearly incredible. To begin, it dazzlingly quotes the first part of a nursery tune, "Cai, cai balao," with descending scales and polyrhythms. Then there is a expressive melody, while fantastic *sui ponticello* effects and whirling figurations fashion an sense of deep ambiguity. The third movement recalls more children's songs. The outer contrapuntal sections frame two movingly lyrical inner sections. Vibrant and dynamic, the final movement continues to draw on folklore and maintains a popular character by comingling melody and driving rhythms. Simply stated it is comprised of an exposition, repeated, followed by a simple tune in harmonics, and a condensed repeat of the primary material.

² It was given only a single performance as part of "George White's Scandals"

**FIFTY-SEVENTH
SEASON
2012-2013**

*Presented in Cooperation with
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Dædalus String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 7, 2011
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Intersection Piano Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, October 28, 2011
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Musica Pacifica

2:30 PM Sunday, November 11, 2011
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Italian Saxophone Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, February 17, 2013
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2:30 PM Sunday, April 21, 2013
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
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- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the lobby or auditorium.
- Please turn off cellular phones and disengage audible alarms on pagers and watches.
- Students are admitted free on a space-available basis.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the current Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tickets are available at the door:
General Admission: \$25
Pacific/Delta Faculty & Staff: \$10
Students with ID card: Free

FOCM welcomes children to our concerts. However, an adult must accompany children ten years and under (no babes in arms please). At the request of our artists, children should not sit in the first four rows.

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